

# Memorandum

**TO: BUILDING BETTER  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**FROM:** James R. Helmer  
Robert L. Davis

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SCHOOL TRAFFIC  
SAFETY PROGRAMS**

**DATE:** 03-24-06

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Approved

Date

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept this report on School Traffic Safety Programs.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City's Department of Transportation (DOT) and the San José Police Department (SJPD) collaborate on a variety of *engineering, education and enforcement* (3 Es) programs to enhance safety in the vicinity of schools. This report provides an update on the status of these programs.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Engineering/School Area Traffic Management**

DOT works with schools and districts throughout the year on a case-by-case basis in an effort to improve traffic flow for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. DOT coordinates with the SJPD and, when appropriate, modifies or installs roadway signage, striping and markings that may enhance safety.

DOT's School Safety Program provided traffic consultation to improve safety in school zones through site visits to 38 elementary, seven middle, and three high schools during 2004-05.

In November 2005, DOT completed the last of the City Auditor's recommendations for the Adult Crossing Guard Program, including revising the formula that calculates the need for a crossing guard. This new formula takes more information into consideration when calculating the Safety Index (e.g., assigning additional points for pedestrians and unusual conditions). By factoring additional criteria into the analysis, the new formula more effectively assesses safety conditions to determine the need for a guard. The School Pedestrian Safety Committee, comprised of school district representatives citywide, was involved in the development of the new formula and initial feedback from the committee has been positive.

As part of the Safe Streets Initiative, pedestrian countdown signal heads are being installed at 72 intersections and pedestrian warning flashing beacons are being installed at 14 uncontrolled crosswalks to enhance pedestrian safety. Many of these locations are in proximity to schools in San José. Installation of these devices began in January 2006 and is scheduled to be complete by the end of June 2006.

### **Education**

The Street Smarts School Safety Education Program has delivered traffic safety education to an estimated 33,600 elementary students, through 343 presentations at 65 schools, since the program launched in January 2005. Curriculum and materials for middle school students was recently completed for Phase II of the program, which kicked off in January 2006.

Eight other California communities and 20 San José neighborhoods have adopted the Street Smarts Neighborhood Program. Although San José now ranks as the safest of the nation's top ten cities for pedestrians, the average age of pedestrians killed in San José has risen steadily over the past three years, from 48, in 2003, to 60, in 2005.

While the Street Smarts educational programs have been effective with school-aged children, it is evident that with an aging and diverse population, more will need to be done to reach our senior citizens with these safety messages and training. Due to this trend, Street Smarts will collaborate with the Police and Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Departments, through their Office on Aging and Aging Services staff, to explore ways to deliver this behavior education to our City's elder population.

### **Enforcement**

The San José Police Department's School Safety and Education Unit promotes student and school safety by staffing warranted locations with Crossing Guards with the goal to prevent pedestrian accidents involving students. Since August 2005, seven guards were redeployed to new locations from intersections that had multiple guards. Currently, there are 176 guards staffing 106 locations citywide. The guards are supervised by 2.5 Crossing Guard Coordinator positions, down from four authorized positions.

Each Crossing Guard Coordinator supervises approximately 60 guards. In addition to filling in for absentee guards, each Coordinator also addresses concerns from school administrators and residents on a daily basis. The Unit provides assistance to area schools in establishing or maintaining School Safety Patrol and Safety Education programs. Coordinators have made four school safety presentations since October, 2005, and participated in 10 weekend safety fairs. Since fall 2005, training has been provided for 45 Safety Patrols. However, due to the high ratio of guards to Coordinators, these supervisors are no longer able to monitor Safety Patrols during the school year.

There is currently a waiting list of 15 additional intersections needing guards. This waiting list is prioritized the previously mentioned Safety Index. The highest qualifying locations are staffed first, similar to the process used with the signal warrant list. There are eight additional schools that have

deployed adult volunteer crossing guards, for which SJPD conducts the training and supplies equipment. These volunteer guards currently staff locations that do not qualify for a paid guard.

### **Summary**

The 3 Es – Engineering, Education and Enforcement – are the cornerstone of San José’s integrated approach to traffic safety, and continue to work effectively as a comprehensive program to reduce injuries and fatalities on city streets. Not only are the numbers of pedestrian injuries and fatalities trending downward, along with the number of injury crashes and other indicators (see statistics below), but San José, since becoming the tenth largest U.S. city, now ranks as the safest of the top ten cities nationwide in pedestrian safety.

#### **Number of reported pedestrian and bike injuries for children (ages 5-14) to and from school (includes fatalities)**

(Source: City’s 2005-06 Operating Budget)

<u>2002-03</u> <b>44 (0 fatalities)</b>	<u>2003-04</u> <b>35 (0 fatalities)</b>	<u>2004-05</u> <b>37 (0 fatalities)</b>
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#### **Number of pedestrian and bicycle-related injuries and fatalities per 1,000 population:**

(Source: City’s 2005-06 Operating Budget)

<u>2002-03</u> <b>.654</b>	<u>2003-04</u> <b>.651</b>	<u>2004-05</u> <b>.635</b>
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#### **Number of reported pedestrian injuries (includes fatalities)**

(Source: City’s 2005-06 Operating Budget)

<u>2002</u> <b>337 (20 fatalities)</b>	<u>2003</u> <b>317 (9 fatalities)</b>	<u>2004</u> <b>310 (15 fatalities)</b>	<u>2005</u> <b>318 (8 fatalities)</b>
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#### **Number of injury crashes (includes fatalities)**

(Source: City’s 2005-06 Operating Budget)

<u>2002-03</u> <b>3,739 (40 fatalities)</b>	<u>2003-04</u> <b>3,601 (18 fatalities)</b>	<u>2004-05</u> <b>3,129 (32 fatalities)</b>
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These collaborative programs continue to receive local and national recognition for their effectiveness. The bullet points below represent key indicators of that effectiveness:

- San José ranks as the safest of the nation’s top ten cities for pedestrians. (based on USDOT report dated 2003.)

- San José has the second lowest pedestrian fatalities of large U.S. cities (750,000+ population). (Based on USDOT report dated 2003.)
- The San José/San Francisco/Oakland metropolitan area was recently rated as the 4<sup>th</sup> safest metropolitan area for kids in the U.S. among the top 47 urban areas nationwide. (From the report, “*Child Pedestrians at Risk – a Ranking of U.S. Metropolitan Areas*,” distributed by Safe Kids Worldwide.
- San Jose is 5<sup>th</sup> in the ranking of pedestrian-friendly big cities (population over 750,000) in the U.S. (*Prevention Magazine* and the American Podiatric Medicine Association.) There are 13 U.S. cities in this population category.
- San José was presented with the America’s Crown Communities Award by *American City and County Magazine* at the NLC Conference in Charlotte, in 2005, for the City’s Street Smarts traffic safety education program.
- In February 2006, the Local Government Commission invited the City of San José to be a project partner in a proposal submitted to the Federal Highway Administration to develop a National Clearinghouse for Safe Routes to School. The proposal recommends using Street Smarts as a national model and resource for school safety nationwide.
- DOT's School Safety Program Manager was recognized by the San José Unified School District Board at their November 3, 2005 Board Meeting for outstanding service to the school district in providing traffic safety consultation. It was noted in the presentation that every school in the district had received assistance from the City for their safety needs at least once.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

Not applicable.

## **COORDINATION**

This report has been coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office.

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